

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

My Mentor's Amazing Path to the Veterinary Profession

By Stephanie Gambino (Guest Author)

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Like other undergraduate pre-veterinary students trying to gain the best possible experience to prepare me for a future career in veterinary medicine, I searched for an animal hospital near my home of Brooklyn, New York. Thankfully, I found a good one and, in the fall of 2008, I began working at the Brooklyn Veterinary Group¹ in Bensonhurst, New York. I worked under the direction of two doctors; one was the owner/director of the practice, the other the associate veterinarian. Almost every Monday another doctor would come in, but I was always unsure of his position.



Stephanie Gambino and Dr. Anthony Miele

(Photo provided by Stephanie Gambino, 2014)

This doctor was Dr. Anthony Miele and he would become a primary influence in my aspirations in veterinary medicine. It turned out that Dr. Miele played a subtle role in the practice at the current time, but was “the man who started it all” way back when Brooklyn Veterinary Group was first created. His story is quite intriguing.

Born and raised in New Jersey, Dr. Miele came from a blue-collar family. No one in his family had attended college, let alone professional school. As a young kid, he had a strong interest in the sciences and medicine, and had a love for animals. When it came time to sort his life out

and decide what he wanted to do, veterinary medicine seemed to just fall into his lap. He graduated from St. Peter's College in New Jersey in 1972 with a major in biology and a minor in chemistry.

While attending college, the United States was amidst the Vietnam War, and the draft was in place. Many young men were doing whatever it took to stay out of the draft, including getting into professional school. Entrance into one of the only 18 US veterinary colleges at the time seemed out of reach. Though international schools were also difficult and competitive, Miele knew his best bet was to attempt to get into veterinary school outside of the US.

His options at the time included colleges in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, the Philippines, and Italy. Though the curriculum was taught in English in the Philippines, the dictatorship at the time made it less appealing for him. Because Dr. Miele was of Italian heritage, he felt that attending school in Italy would be the best fit for him.²

After graduating from college, Dr. Miele made his way to Italy to begin his veterinary education at the University of Naples. Though he spoke not one word of Italian, he enrolled in classes immediately. The Italian veterinary curriculum is a five-year program, commencing right out of high school. However, the curriculum was designed in such a way that you could set a pace for yourself and take exams when you were ready rather than in a lock-step manner. If you failed an exam, you would re-study and take it when you were better prepared.

Dr. Miele described his first encounter with a veterinary textbook as one of pure frustration. He went through the first page line by line and translated what he read. An hour had passed by the time he had completed the first page. Realizing how difficult and time consuming this was going to be, he closed his books and immersed himself in society. Within four months, he could speak Italian at the level of an elementary school student and within a year could speak at the level of a high school student.

At this point he returned to school, now armed with the Italian language. Although he did much better in school, exams were still extremely difficult as they were given orally, and in Italian. This meant that he could not take time to process information, translate it to English, come up with an answer, and then re-translate it back to Italian, but instead he had to maintain a conversation in Italian that demonstrated he had a fair understanding of the material. This was a huge obstacle for him, especially when he knew what he wanted to say but had difficulty figuring out how to say it.

Dr. Miele persisted and graduated in 1980. He returned to the US to sit for the veterinary boards but failed at his first attempt, eventually passing a couple of years later. In the meantime, he landed a job working with Standardbred horses at the Yonkers and Meadowlands raceways. His primary interest was in companion animal medicine, though, and after a year and a half, he got a job in Brooklyn working at a small animal clinic. He spent three years working there, and in 1985 opened Brooklyn Veterinary Group. He had a concept that involved a team approach to veterinary medicine and named the practice a "group" with the intention of

opening more practices that would each bring different strengths to the profession as well as create a supportive environment. Over the next ten years, Dr. Miele opened eight other New York City hospitals with the group.

Dr. Miele now works in a couple of the veterinary hospitals including Brooklyn Veterinary Group and Boulevard Veterinary Group, but is still an integral part of the collaboration. He has also opened a 24-hour veterinary hospital in Rome, Italy. Though an entrepreneur, Dr. Miele has also been heavily involved in organized veterinary medicine in the New York-New Jersey area, and his contributions and leadership have been recognized through various professional awards.

Dr. Miele has been by my side through my undergraduate curriculum, my application to veterinary school, my current experience in veterinary school and, I am certain, will be an integral part of my future. From the start, he went out of his way to teach me, show me, engage me, and give me advice— he has been there every step of the way for me.

He is an incredible person who has done many creative and adventurous things, and he will continue to do so. His perseverance and outstanding accomplishments inspire me; I want to make as big of an impact in veterinary medicine as he did. But I think it is his belief in me that has touched me most. I will always carry with me the words he once said to me: “I saw the twinkle in your eye and I knew you were special.”

I strive to be the amazing veterinarian and person he believes me to be. I will forever be thankful for his presence in my life.

¹ [Brooklyn Veterinary Group](#), Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, New York.

² During the 1970s, there were about nine universities in Italy and two in the Philippines that accepted significant numbers of veterinary students from the US. Approximately half of the students were from New York and New Jersey.

KEYWORDS:

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TOPIC:

Foreign Veterinary College

LEADING QUESTION:

What countries accepted many American veterinary students in the 1970s?

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